The Melville Society

NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 1949

Volume IV Number 1

The Newsletter hereby presents itself in a new format, aimed at achieving respectability with a minimum of expense. Members have been asking for some time that we attempt a "face lifting." The secretary is curious to know with what enthusiasm or lack of it the "new" Newsletter will be received.

DECEMBER MEETING

Thirty-one members of the Society were present for the annual meeting held on December 29, 1948, in the New York Public Library. The program included a report from Howard P. Vincent regarding the schedule of publication of the Hendricks House-Farrar, Straus Melville series and a report from John H. Birss which contained the welcome news that the Melville bibliography is "virtually completed and ready for publication."

Luther S. Mansfield read a paper entitled "**Mardi** (1849), and a Voyage Thence," in which he described Melville as the first great American writer to dwell at length upon the theme of mankind's spiritual loneliness—a favorite theme of the twentieth century, and in which he characterized Taji's objective as the desire to become a whole man (thinker, doer, sayer) and his regret (resulting in the abdication of his manhood) as regret not merely with respect to society but with respect to the whole world of reality.

Henry A. Murray spoke on "Nathaniel Hawthorne, alias Plotinus Plinlimmon" and adduced comparisons between Hawthorne and Melville's proponent of "a virtuous expediency." The evidence chiefly comprised, besides the belief that Melville drew upon real people for his cast of characters in **Pierre,** those traits of personality shared by both Hawthorne and Plinlimmon: for example, non-benevolence, mystery and inscrutability, the habit of detached scrutiny, youthfulness of attitude, cheerful contentment, manliness of figure, opposition to self-renouncing enthusiasts, and the like.

After the secretary's report had been accepted, the election of the following officers took place: Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf to serve a five-year term as a member of the executive committee; Tyrus Hillway to serve as secretary for an additional three-year term. With William Braswell reaching the end of his presidential term, F. Barron Freeman became president of the Society for the year 1949. Other members of the present executive committee are the following: Elizabeth Foster (1950), Howard P. Vincent (1951), and Willard Thorp (1952).

The New York Public Library graciously provided an exhibit of some of its Melville materials for our meeting.

THIS YEAR

Reports coming from a considerable number of our members indicate that few are planning to attend the MLA convention at Stanford University in September. The executive committee has been considering, therefore, the wisdom of holding an annual meeting in connection with the English Institute at Columbia University. The probable date is about September 10. Preliminary inquiries have been made, and the replies appear favorable. Further suggestions from the members regarding the time and place of meeting and the nature of the program will be very welcome.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Items which the secretary will send upon request: (1) a list of dissertations dealing with Herman Melville, including all available information regarding plans for publication; (2) the financial statement of the Society for 1948; (3) a list of Melville items in the Wesleyan University Library; (4) a few reprints of "Humor in **Moby Dick**," an article by Joseph Jones which appeared in the University of Texas **Studies in English,** 1945-1946.

John H. Birss plans to prepare an annual bibliography of books and articles on Melville for members of the Society.

Three sections of the check-list of

Melville's books compiled by Merton Sealts have appeared in recent issues of the **Harvard Library Bulletin.** According to the most recent information, there will be at least two more sections in subsequent issues. This means that members of the Society will not receive reprints of the entire check-list before the end of 1949.

Most of our members appear to be still deep in Henry Murray's introduction to **Pierre** (Hendricks House-Farrar, Straus).

Random House has announced for April publication **The Complete Stories of Herman Melville**, edited by Jay Leyda.

Macmillan has announced for April publication **The Spell of the Pacific** with an introduction by James A. Michener. The volume will be an anthology with a selection from Melville's works.

Herman Melville: A Critical Study, by Richard Chase, has been scheduled by Macmillan for fall publication.

Rudolph Von Abele of American University has undertaken an analytical study of **Moby-Dick** "with a view to elucidating as thoroughly as possible Melville's strategic approach to his theme, in terms of rhetoric, of metaphor, and of structure."

Tom A. Little of Walla Walla College reports completion of the first volume of his projected listing of all allusions in Melville's works, and he promises early completion of the remaining two volumes.

Annette P. Sheldon is making "A Critical Analysis of Melville's Short Stories" at Indiana University.

B. M. Woolpert of the Ohio State University is engaged in a study of the Melville revival from 1919 to the present.

Hazel T. Emry is examining at Indiana University "Form and Symbol in the Writings of Hawthorne." It will include references to Melville.

Lucien Santoni, a student at Yale, is writing on "Melville, the French, and France."

Uniform of Flesh, a dramatic version of **Billy Budd** prepared by Louis O. Coxe and R. H. Chapman, was given its first performance by the Experimental Theater on January 29 at the Lenox Hill Playhouse in New York City.

A reader of the **Explicator** magazine asks for an explication of Melville's poem, "Art" (in **Timoleon**). To date no Melville scholar has proved willing to provide it.

An excellent and unusual periodical which has frequently published Melville articles and which needs the support of a wider audience is **American Notes & Queries,** now issued at North Bennington, Vermont.

LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTIONS

Is your college library interested in receiving copies of the Newsletter? The secretary has been informed that several of the larger libraries would be interested in complete files of all issues. Unfortunately, since the first numbers of the Newsletter were produced in extremely small quantities, only a very few copies remain. Some back numbers, of course, can be supplied. While the Newsletter must be regarded more as a curiosity than as a useful piece of scholarly apparatus, there yet apparently exists among certain librarians a flicker of interest in its acquisition. Shall this flicker be fanned into a flame? In the absence of any action upon the matter by our executive committee, the secretary will undertake to send the Newsletter for a year to any library which will supply its dollar. He will also try to send such back numbers as may be spared. Every librarian should be warned, however, that the Newsletter has no ambitions of becoming another in the present host of scholarly periodicals. It will, we hope, remain informal, unpretentious, and a vehicle chiefly for news and for such communications as may be of interest to members of the Society.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER
IS PUBLISHED THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH YEAR
for the members of the Melville Society, a group of scholars and other persons interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to contribute toward the improvement of the facilities for literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership (including subscription to the Newsletter) may be secured through payment of one dollar annually to the Secretary, Tyrus Hillway, 423 Pequot Avenue, New London, Connecticut.